1605/808

REMARKS

ON THE

Preſent CONSPIRACY.

IN reading the *Report* of the *Committee* of the *Houſe* of *Commons*, relating to the *Conſpiracy* againſt the *King* and *Government*, it has happen'd to Me, as it uſually does to Thoſe who look upon an *Hiſtorical Painting*, with any Attention. In all *Pieces* of that ſort, (whether the *Subject* be ſuch as gives Pleaſure, or creates Horrour) there is ſome *One Principal* Figure, placed in ſuch a Point of *View*, with ſuch Circumſtances of *Action Situation*, and *Poſture*, as to ſtrike upon the *Eye* and the *Imagination*, ſo much beyond all the *Other* Figures ſurrounding it, as to make *Them* but little taken Notice of, at firſt View, but as They ſerve to ſet off that Principal One, and to make it more remakable. They add, Every One of Them, ſomething to the Effect which the Whole has; and are entertaining or moving in their ſeveral Degrees: but the Impreſſion which remains deepeſt, and operates the longeſt, is That which ariſes from the Main Figure, placed in the ſtrongeſt Point of Light. And I dare ſay, I am not ſingular in This, but that the ſame has happen'd to Every Man who has read the *Report*; and that Every One who now reads this *Paper*, is before-hand with Me in his Thoughts, and knows What and Whom I point at, as well as if I had uſed the plaineſt Words.

When we ſee *Men*, forgetting the Intereſt of Mankind, and of Human Society. —— *Britons*, trampling upon the Happineſs of their Native-Country, and embarking in Projects of its Ruin. —— *Proteſtants*, contriving Night and Day how to bring in a *Popiſh Pretender*, and to extinguiſh every Hope of Support, or even *Toleration*, to their own *Religion*. —— *Churchmen*, ſolemnly devoting the *Church*, of which They boaſt to be Members, to utter inevitable Deſtruction. —*Freemen*, who actually enjoy all the *Rights* and *Privileges* of *Laws*, all the Happineſs of Liberty and Property, (without the Pretence of any one Act of Arbitrary Power in the *Crown*) plotting and conſpiring how to bind *Themſelves*, and their *Countrymen*, in the *Chains* of *Slavery*; and inviting an *Armed Force* of Foreigners to aſſiſt Them in this *Self-murther*, and this extenſive Deſtruction. —This is ſurely enough to raiſe a warm Concern in our Breaſts, and to make the Spirits move and boil with the Communion within Us.

But when this is found to be but a ſmall part of the Whole, and we proceed farther, and ſee Men (not *Men* of low Degree, and meaner Education) but *Men* of *Diſtinction* and high *Quality*: upon whoſe Lips the Word *Honour* has uſed to dwell, and at the Point of whoſe Swords, every *Affront* to it has demanded and expected Satisfaction, upon any the leaſt Imputation of *Falſhood*, or *Unfaithfulneſs* to their *Words* or *Promiſes* —— To ſee ſuch Perſons, not only *ſaying*, but publickly *promiſing*; not only *promiſing*, but *ſolemnly ſwearing*, One Thing; and determinately purſuing Another: vowing Allegiance to K. GEORGE, diſclaiming and *abjuring* all Title in the *Pretender*, and all Regard to Him, and Correſpondence with him; and at the ſame time not from any ſudden Paſſion, not from any Heat of Provication, (which might alleviate the Crime) but coolly are deliberately, and continually paying that Allegiance to the *Pretender*, which They ſwore to K. GEORGE; and applying that *Renunciation* and *Abjuration* to K. GEORGE, which They vowed before God and the World, They meant to the *Pretender*, without any *Prevarication* or *mental Reſervation* —— To ſee all the Maxims of *Honour*, (for I will not *here* ſpeak of *Religion*) thus ſet at nought by the Profeſſors of *Honour*; and Thoſe who would perhaps hazard their *Lives* to vindicate their *Reputation* from the Suſpicion of *Treachery* and *Unfaithfulneſs* in *Common* Life, greedily ſnatching at the *Guilt* and *Imputation* of it in *Publick* Life; and Themſelves proſtituting their *Words* and *Honours*, and *Vows* and *Oaths*: firſt readily *pledging* Them all, as the ſtrongeſt Ties and Cords of *Fidelity* within, and then *breaking* them *All* like ſo many Threads which They had bound upon Themſelves only in Sport. — This is a Step higher, and raiſes the former *Commotion* into ſome Degree of *Horrour*.

But there is ſomething ſtill higher than this. The *Principal Figure* is yet unſpoken of. And how ſhall I deſcribe it? — Happy would it be for the Intereſts of *Religion*, and happy upon many other Accounts, if the thickeſt *Veil* of Darkneſs could be drawn over it; or if it could be removed backwards into the obſcureſt Corner of the Piece. But it cannot be. The thickeſt Veil that Art and Tenderneſs together can contrive, cannot poſſibly hide it, even from the moſt undiſtinguiſhing Eye. It is the Figure of One, who has himſelf puſh'd it ſo forward, and placed it before the World in ſo glaring a Light, that no Skill can

cover

cover it, The *Safety* of the *Publick* has demanded, that the *Character* He has willingly and eagerly assumed should be exposed to View: and when That is the Case, nothing can excuse the not entring into it, with all the Freedom which the Nature of the Thing requires.

I am not now concerning my self with the Nature of Convictive Evidence in Courts, whether the *supreme* or *Inferior*; nor with the Reasonableness and Justice of the Interposition of the Whole *Legislature*, in Case of Declared Crimes, which affect the Safety of all that is committed to their Care; or with the *Punishment* due to the *Criminals*. I may have Occasion to say something upon such Subjects, in the Sequel of the *Argument*. Every One who has Eyes, (whatever his Opinion may be about *these* Points,) cannot but see enough in the *Report*, to put it *beyond Doubt* within *his own* Breast, *Who* are the *Persons* as truly and as certainly *guilty*, as They could be proved to be by a *Hundred* Oral Witnesses. And whatever becomes of *Them*? whether They shall be permitted to ride over the Heads of their *Injur'd Countrymen* in Pomp and Ease; or shall receive any due Marks of publick Displeasure; I am not at present troubling My self with this: but I am speaking of the *private Sentiments* which the View of the *Crime*, and of the *Persons* guilty of it, must raise in every Breast: and will now therefore, go on from *These* I have mention'd, to a yet higher Degree.

The many Passions within Us have already found enough to rouse and animate Them against *those*, who have been so far from Regard to their *Country*, or to their own *Honour*, that They have, by Falshood to *God* and *Man*, prostituted the *latter*, in Order more effectually to ruin the *former*. But when We not only see *This*, but find placed before our Eyes a *Person*, whose *Character* is sacred; whose *Profession* is the Immediate Service of God; whose peculiar *Business*, (to which He has solemnly dedicated Himself,) is to preach the Laws, of the *Gospel*; to inculcate the great Duties of *Truth* and *Fidelity*, which regard to our *Words*, and much more to our Oaths; and to pronounce God's Judgments against *Wicked Falshood* and *Impious Perjury*. —When We imagine to Ourselves this Person, lifting up his pliable Hands and Eys to Heaven; calling the Great God, who dwells there, to Witness, that He does, *without any Prevarication or Mental Reservation*, swear to be *Faithful and bear true Allegiance* to K. GEORGE, and *abjure* the *Pretender*, and *vow* to oppose his *Pretensions*, to *discover* all Conspiracies in his Favour, and to support the present Government; imprecating upon Himself the Vengeance of the same God, if this be Hypocrisy; and praying and wishing to be treated by his great Judge, according to the Sincerity of these *Oaths*, in the true natural Meaning of the Words—When We trace his Steps even into the Court of the same *King*, and view him *there* humbly accepting a Favour at his Royal Hands, paying him in *Thanks* in an obsequious Manner, and giving him all private Assurances, from *His own* Mouth, of constant Respect or his Person, and all Protestations against Every Instance, at least, of Unfaithfulness to HIM—When We then enlarge our View, and find this *same Person*, instead of *Allegiance* to King GEORGE practising *Himself*, and encouraging in *Others*, the Highest Treason against him; instead of *opposing* the *Pretender's* Cause, *contriving* his Success, and furnishing Him towards it, with his own Advice, and the Money of Others; instead of *discovering* Conspiracies against the present happy Establishment, Himself framing and conducting One of the most dangerous that ever yet was known; in the Pulpit, praying for K. GEORGE, and in publick Courts binding himself to him by all Sacred Ties; but in his Closet, laying *Schemes* of dethroning Him, and in his private Conduct setting all within his Verge at Work to compass the extensive Ruin—What shall I say? —When We see this; there are no Colours either to hide it, or to describe it, or to aggravate it. Nothing can be added to the Character — Nothing, to the several various Commotions the View of this must raise within — Enmity to his *Native-Country*, under the *Guise of Friendship*! — Determin'd Ruin to a Protestant *Church*, under the Mask of *Zeal* exceeding the Measure of it in Others! — Words and Promises and Oaths trampled under Foot, as the Dirt of the Street; or shaken off as Trifles, fit only to be regarded by the lower Tribe of *Hearers* and *Disciples*! — Faithlessness added to *Imperfidility*; *Disgrace* crown'd by *Impiety* and *Impiety* render'd conspicuous by *Perjury*! — A *Behaviour* on *One* Side, threatning nothing but Destruction to All that is valuable in *Civil Society*; on the *Other* Side, big with infinite Mischief to the *Honour* and *Influence* of All that is properly call'd *Religion*.

For thus it is, and thus it ever will be. If a Layman transgresses the Bounds and Fences of God, We of the Laity, tho' We may feel a little Partiality and Indulgence within us, yet cannot help looking upon it, with Indignation, according to its aggravating Circumstances, as a Scandal upon Human Nature: but we are not apt to think the Honour of Religion much concern'd in it. But if a Clergyman a Preacher, One of the Highest Order is discovered to exalt himself against all the Powers of Religion, and to practise all Perfidy and Iniquity, in the Face of Heaven and Earth—This is such an Appearance, as shocks the Frame of Good Spirits; and creates a Triumph in others, hardly to be restrained, and never to be quite extinguish'd: And throws a Scandal in the Way of Religion, which nothing can make greater, but the Zeal of Any of the same Character, to palliate and defend it.

Whatever Reflections are made upon this whole Procedure Within Doors, in a political View; without Doors, I am sure the first Reflections, and Those which lie heaviest upon every well-form Mind, are—How is the Love of our Country extinguished! How low is Honour sunk! and principally, How deep a Wound is here given to Religion! and who shall cure it?—Who shall cure it, I cannot say: but Who shall answer for it, and answer for it severely, That I can certainly say. In the main while, in becomes All who wish well to every Good Principal, to do what They can to stop the Progress of such Scandals beyond their due Bounds. And therefore, Whilst They, whose proper Affair it is, are considering how Best to guard a Brave People from the Civil Effects of such Perjury and Impiety; give me leave to look upon it in another Light, and to speak to my Countrymen at present, upon another View of the *Subject*—If You have any degree of Sense left of what is good or valuable, Mourn over the *Discovery*, to which You are now Witnesses. Mourn for the Loss of all Love to your *Country* in *Those*, who have combined to sacrifice it to its implacable Enemies. Mourn for the *Devastation* of all *Principles* of Gratitude and Justice, in *Those*, who have trampled under Foot all *Obligations* from *Others*, and all *Promises* from *Themselves*. Mourn for the laying waste all the Influences of *Nobility* of Spirit, and Inbred *Honour*, among *Those*, whose Education in *Honour's* School, might, one would hope, have elevated their Minds far above All that Mean and Groveling Spirits alone are capable of.—But, in the highest degree, Mourn for *Religion*, *wounded deep in the House of its* pretended *Friends*. Lament the Motives of *Christianity* vilified and cast aside; the Ties of Conscience disregarded; the *Bonds* of Sacred *Oaths* and solemn *Imprecations* broke through, by *One*, who—It is a Pain to say what—Your own Thoughts will supply it. And as You lament; at the same time *detest* the *Dishonour*. and the *Impiety* of the Whole. But carry not This into Unjustifiable Surmises. Do not think that, because there are *Some* dead to the Interest of their Country, there are not *Numbers* alive to it, and still ready to hazard Life, to save All that makes Life worth enjoying. Do not imagine, because Some of high Distinction have forgot the Lessons of true Greatness and Honour, that therfore there are not Many still left, whose Nobility and Distinction is only the Mark and Motive of their Untainted Honour. Do not think you have a Right, from the Example of Some Churchmen, unmindful of their Country, and faithless to their solemn *Oaths*, to collect that there are not *Numbers* of the same Body, true to the Interest of the Publick, faithful to their Vows, and Detesters of all perfidious Impiety. And above All, Remember that *Religion* is it self all unspotted pure and white, though Some may be black within, who cloath Themselves with it; nay, that they therefore cloath Themselves with it, because it is it self the most excellent and lovely of all Things. Guard your Reflections within these Bounds; and the Warmth of your Detestations and Resentments can hardly carry you too far.

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The Eighteenth Century

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